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Wednesday, 7 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives (A/53/45)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/211)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/210)

Draft decision (A/53/45, para. 87)

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): First of all, let me congratulate Mr. Opertti for being chosen to preside over this important plenary session of the General Assembly. I should also like to associate myself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in March 1995 marked the renewed commitment of the international community to treating social development as the highest priority in the agenda of nations and of the world.

We are pleased to note that, during the three years that have passed since the Summit, this commitment has been translated into an enhanced endeavour to promote social development, in particular in the three areas of focus of the Summit: poverty eradication, productive employment and social integration. In this regard, my delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/53/211. The report has provided us with updated information on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development by principal intergovernmental bodies, such as the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, and by the United Nations specialized agencies and the community of nations as a whole. A timetable has been devised for the intergovernmental process towards the year 2000, when the special session will take place to review and assess the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

The report acknowledges that many Governments continue to make efforts to uphold the commitments made at Copenhagen in 1995. We also share the view that the political momentum provided by the Summit needs to be further maintained and strengthened.

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However, we share the concern, as manifested in the Secretary-General's remarks, that

> "poverty, unemployment and social integration continue to be desperately serious problems which tear at the social fabric of many countries and are often the source of persistent subregional and regional tensions". (*A/53/211, para. 22*)

We believe that greater efforts should be further pursued to implement the goals agreed at the Summit.

With regard to the activities of the United Nations specialized agencies, my delegation commends the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its research activities on linkages between poverty reduction and gender equality and between poverty reduction and inequality, as well as in assessing the impacts of globalization on poverty and resource distribution. We would also like to commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on its contributions and achievements.

Along this line, an important international meeting on the 20/20 Initiative will be held from 27 to 29 October 1998 in Hanoi, the capital city of our country, to assess the progress made since the 1996 Oslo Conference. The Hanoi conference will focus on the significance of investing in basic social services and on how to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in resource spending on basic social services and to optimize the quality and accessibility of services. It is an honour for Viet Nam to host this conference in Hanoi and we are convinced that it will be a success. The process known as the 20/20 Initiative represents a real endeavour of the countries concerned about the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development. We take this opportunity to extend our special appreciation to the Netherlands, Norway and UNICEF for the pursuit of this initiative.

At its resumed organizational session in May, as well as its substantive session in July this year, the Economic and Social Council focused its discussions on, among other things, many social issues, such as women, children, refugees, drug and crime control. The Council adopted a number of resolutions for coordination in activities by functional commissions and specialized agencies to conduct studies on social issues, work out programmes and assist countries in dealing with them effectively. Being a new member of the Economic and Social Council, Viet Nam has actively participated in the Council's deliberations.

The Commission for Social Development met in New York from 10 to 20 February to consider the priority theme under its restructured agenda and multi-year programme of work, entitled "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons". It adopted recommendations for action at all levels and in the areas of promoting social integration through responsive government, full participation in society, non-discrimination, tolerance, equality and social justice. These recommendations also call for enhancing social protection, reducing vulnerability and enhancing employment opportunities for groups with specific needs; and doing away with violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse. It also decided on the priority themes for the next session, to be held in February 1999, as "Social services for all" and "Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit".

The Preparatory Committee's organizational session, held in New York from 19 to 22 May 1998, held a general debate on the preparations for the special session and two panel discussions on the appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. My delegation takes note of the excellent work done by those bodies.

Fully aware of the urgent need for the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, Vietnam has continued its policy of renovation — *Doi moi* — and achieved considerable success in the socio-economic fields during the last few years. Social development constitutes a major component of our country's comprehensive long-term development strategy and plans. I would like to focus on the most outstanding areas that have attracted much attention and investment by the Government, namely, employment, gender equality and poverty eradication.

Employment has increasingly been a major issue. It is estimated that in a population of 78 million, the workforce will be over 40 million by the year 2000. The Government has made every effort to produce more job opportunities, especially for the young segment of the workforce, and to reduce the level of unemployment through an integrated policy of socio-economic development. In the context of the Asian financial crisis, the task of looking for jobs is made even more difficult due to the lack of adequate working efficiency and proper training of the general workforce. Only 12.2 per cent of workers have the technical training needed in the modern

work place. At present, almost 70 per cent of the labour force are involved in agriculture, while only 10.5 per cent work in industry and construction and 19.7 per cent work in services. Along with economic development, the country is trying to increase the number of skilled workers from 22 per cent to 25 per cent of the labour force, which will require fundamental changes in the methodology and organization of vocational training. The workforce will also have to be distributed appropriately in the economic sectors and geographic regions.

In an effort to deal with this situation and to mitigate the cutbacks at State-owned enterprises, in July 1997 the Government of Viet Nam approved a national job creation programme which will last for four years, from 1997 to the year 2000. Its basic goal is twofold: to create new jobs, and to protect those who are unemployed, which also means to ensure employment for those who are capable of working and to implement measures to support jobless people. In order to achieve these goals, economic development must generate 5 million new jobs. Furthermore, the programme must train 4.5 million people and increase the skilled workforce to 25 per cent by the year 2000.

The programme also consists of three main measures for effective implementation. First, government laws and policies must strengthen national economic growth, the cornerstone of higher employment rates. For instance, industrial and economic zones should focus on small enterprise development and appropriate technology to attract the largest number of workers. Rural development should also proceed with the goal of providing an adequate number of jobs. Secondly, workers should be provided with stable jobs, not mass dismissals, and unemployment insurance should gradually be applied across the economy. Thirdly, direct assistance and job promotion for vulnerable people should be strengthened. The programme will be supported by the National Fund for Job Creation, estimated at 4.8 trillion Vietnamese dong yearly, and other investment sources which include the State budget and government sponsorship.

Advancement of women continues to be a major commitment of the Government of Viet Nam. Following the Beijing Conference, the Government has formulated a national plan of action which incorporates the objectives of the national strategies and the programmes of action from various sectors, provinces and cities. This plan of action consists of 11 concrete objectives and guidelines, some of which are to create jobs and equal opportunities for women in education and training so as to improve their educational level in various areas, to improve health care for and protection of women and children, to enhance the role and position of women in leadership and decision-making, to enhance the role of the family and to protect female children and facilitate their development in all fields. The National Committee for the Advancement of Women (CFAW) has been designated to coordinate these activities.

Recently, a survey was completed on mechanisms for the advancement of women at all levels. It has been recommended, among other things, that gender awareness and policies be disseminated to all CFAW members at all levels, that statistical indicators on gender be collected regularly, that a gender analysis framework be integrated in every organization's working plan and that the human resources and facilities of CFAW be strengthened.

The most important area of all is poverty eradication. In order to realize the national motto "Wealthy people, strong country, just and civilized society", the Government of Viet Nam, with the assistance of the World Bank, has been carrying out a national programme for development and poverty alleviation. During the last few years, priority has been given to poverty reduction and the elimination of hunger in mountainous and remote rural areas. The Government set up various funds for infrastructure construction, providing roads, communication networks, electricity and clean water systems for the most disadvantaged groups of people in those areas. Thanks to these efforts, in 1997 alone there was a 1.53 per cent decrease in the number of poor households in the country. However, with the negative impact of globalization, coupled with the Asian financial crisis, there remain many difficulties for the Government in dealing with the cause of poverty eradication. In this regard, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our high appreciation and gratitude to donor countries and the United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund for their effective cooperation and valuable assistance to Viet Nam.

Finally, as we have entered the process of preparation for the International Year of Older Persons, to be observed in 1999, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its high appreciation for the initiative taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Thursday, 1 October, in launching the Year. This activity fully corresponds with our national tradition of the younger generation and society always respecting

the wisdom of and caring for older persons. In this regard, the Government of Viet Nam is fully committed to the ultimate goal of the International Year of Older Persons, namely to build a true "Society for all ages".

In concluding, I would like to reiterate that the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is fully committed to the objectives and principles contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action adopted in 1995. We will continue our cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies in our common cause for social development.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and to thank the Secretariat for providing us with the documents before this Assembly. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/211, in particular, contains useful information on follow-up activities being undertaken by Governments and by the United Nations system since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/25 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

My delegation fully endorses the call made by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for organizations of the United Nations system to "utilize fully existing national-level mechanisms and frameworks" *(A/53/211, para. 34)*, while ensuring that support for the translation of conference outcomes into concrete national policies continues to remain a priority of the United Nations system.

In keeping with the importance my delegation attaches to field coordination, we also welcome the workshop jointly sponsored by the ACC and the United Nations Development Group, in Turin, Italy, in December 1997. This workshop developed integrated guidance for the resident coordinator system for country-level follow-up to global conferences. We ask that this kind of activity be continued and, if possible, that it become an integral part of the training for resident coordinators.

The adoption in June 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work by the International Labour Conference represents a further step in preserving the dignity of the worker as a human being. This is particularly important, as the human person is often ignored in favour of the powerful gods of the market, which serves only to augment social exclusion and makes the task of promoting social integration a Sisyphean one.

My delegation wishes to give special recognition to the role of the Commission for Social Development, which has primary responsibility for follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit. We fully endorsed the agreed conclusions on the priority theme for 1998 — "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons" — which was adopted by the Commission at its thirty-sixth session.

The agreed conclusions included recommendations for action in promoting social integration at all levels, through, *inter alia*, responsive government, enhancing social protection, creating employment opportunities for groups with specific needs and addressing violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse as factors of social disintegration.

Jamaica's experience with the process of social integration is similar to that of other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean. In our societies, pluralist tendencies are quite evident, based upon the historical experience of colonialism and the plantation economy, which brought together persons of diverse social, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Jamaica has achieved a remarkable degree of social integration over the years, due largely to the breakdown of the traditional power relations which were based on a hierarchy of race and colour. The existence of a democratic political system has been a major contributor to this reduction in social divisions.

Nevertheless, we are still faced with the challenge posed by the unequal distribution of wealth, power and prestige among the various social groups.

In order to overcome this challenge, Jamaica has adopted several strategies to promote greater participation of all groups in society in the economic, social and cultural development of the nation, from the community to the national level.

Recognizing that these strategies require serious investment in social institutions, social capital and human resource capacity-building, within the framework of poverty eradication, the Government has already incorporated elements such as the following into its national programme: human resource development, emphasizing the expansion of opportunities for education and skills training, including reform of the educational system at primary and secondary levels; a community-based approach to development; the development of

social skills, focusing primarily on the infusion of family life education and related subjects in school curricula in order to strengthen the family as a basic social institution; an employee share ownership programme; and the strengthening of the justice system.

In all of these and other policy initiatives, the Jamaican Government recognizes the special needs of vulnerable groups of society, as well as the special conditions of deprived urban communities and underdeveloped rural areas.

My delegation participated actively in the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Social Summit in May this year, and we fully support the decisions made at that session. We note in particular decision III of the session, which recommends that the Commission for Social Development be entrusted with the responsibility of acting as a forum for national reporting in the lead-up to the special session. We await with interest the general guidelines, structure and common framework for national reporting to be formulated by the Secretary-General, as requested by the Preparatory Committee.

The Jamaican Government recognizes the importance of non-governmental organizations and the involvement of civil society in the implementation and follow-up to the Summit's Declaration and Programme of Action. In this regard, we wish to make special mention of the work of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), which has been organizing regional and subregional non-governmental organization forums and other meetings on social implementation.

With respect to the special session itself, Jamaica anticipates a full and intensive agenda, as we will be involved in the challenging task of assessing achievement of the goals set at Copenhagen. The Jamaican Government agrees that that session must not renegotiate the commitments agreed at Copenhagen. We are fully conscious that the true measure of our commitment to the principles embodied in the Declaration must be demonstrated in concrete actions.

I therefore wish to reiterate my Government's appreciation to the relevant agencies of the United Nations system for their responsiveness to our various initiatives.

We look forward to expanding these and other partnerships as we seek effective global solutions to the serious problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.

Ms. Banerjee (India): It is my privilege to address the Assembly on the agenda item on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Allow me, on behalf of the Indian delegation, to join all those who have spoken before me in congratulating Mr. Opertti on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. Let me also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for the highly informative reports that have been prepared and issued on this item and for the efforts and initiatives of the Secretariat to advance the goals set by the World Summit at Copenhagen.

We would also like to associate ourselves fully with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The World Summit for Social Development marked a watershed in the recognition by the international community that development could not be limited simply to economic development or economic growth, but rather that it would have to be seen in terms of the extent to which it benefited the human person in community with others and contributed to wider social progress in larger freedom. Specifically, it succeeded in arriving at a shared global commitment at the highest level to eradicating poverty, achieving full employment and strengthening social solidarity, and it increased the attention given to social issues by many countries and most international organizations. Together with the other United Nations global conferences of the 1990s, it has led to a substantially revised and more holistic agenda of development that, at least theoretically, places participatory government, sustainable development, human rights and equity at the centre of development.

The period of three years into the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit is perhaps too short to have yielded palpable or measurable progress at the field level in the lives of people all over the world. The yardstick of success must necessarily be the extent to which social goals highlighted by the Summit have been, or are being, mainstreamed or prioritized in both national development and international relations, in particular international economic relations. It can be gauged from the extent to which institutions safeguarding social development, particularly in times of crisis, have

evolved. It can also be judged by the extent to which commitments made at the Summit have been, or are being, honoured. Another index could be the extent to which social considerations have become significant policy inputs in the sphere of inter-State economic relations, bilateral or multilateral.

The years of the mid-1990s, before and after the Social Summit, witnessed a period of growth and improvement in living standards many parts of the world, including a number of developing countries. It would be tempting to say that this period of growth and prosperity also led to a reinforcement of the goals of social development and their centrality in economic transactions. But the contrary is true: the suddenness and intensity of periodic crises, of which the Asian crisis is only the latest example, their ripple effects in other parts of the world and the inability of the international system to anticipate or contain them, have revealed the fragility of such progress and our incomprehension and helplessness before them.

The economic crisis has aggravated global inequalities and the marginalization of countries in relation to market-driven prosperity at the international level, as well as disparities at the national level. It has exposed a basic disjunction between social goals and unfettered markets, particularly short-term capital markets. It has underscored the obvious fact that the long-term development of a large part of the developing world has not been adequately supported by the international system. And it has demonstrated our basic unpreparedness to deal with the social consequences of economic turbulence that is not always, or entirely, of our own making. The three key objectives of the Social Summit — the eradication of poverty, the goal of full employment and enhanced social integration — have received serious setbacks in some parts of the world with the serious possibility of similar repercussions elsewhere.

Under the multi-year programme of work to assess progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Summit, priority this year has been given to the question of social integration. Our delegation had an opportunity to present its views on some of the predicaments involved in this and related themes facing developing countries at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. These were the primacy of the challenge of poverty to social integration, given its magnitude, scale and global nature; the particular strains on the social fabric posed by the difficulties of addressing old and new problems of social development in the context of catching up with economic, social and living standards achieved by the advanced industrial countries in a much shorter time-frame, bearing in mind historical disadvantages; the vulnerability not just of communities, but of entire countries, to marginalization on account of such historical disadvantages compounded by market forces; the imperative of economic growth for distributive justice, even as the goals of social development — eradication of poverty, productive employment, sustainable livelihood and social integration — have to be provided for in the process of growth; and the issue of steady and enhanced external financial resources in the form of official development assistance, long-term non-concessional funding from multilateral institutions and private capital flows.

In the meantime, the Asian crisis has drawn attention to the devastating social implications of market behaviour accompanying globalization to date. Social development can be seen on two axes: one straddling basic human rights values and fundamental freedoms which need to be pursued independent of the economy, and the other straddling poverty eradication, employment and social integration, which are heavily dependent on the state of the economy. The onslaught of the Asian crisis, and the manner in which an essentially financial crisis has snowballed into a major economic and social crisis in some parts of the world, points out the inextricable interrelationship between social and economic development. It is also a crucial input into the initiatives that may be required for the follow-up to the social agenda beyond the special session in the year 2000.

What is clear is that for the goals of the Social Summit to be fully realized for the developing countries, three sets of initiatives are indispensable: a set of economic policies and mechanisms that can provide short-term stability and long-term growth and development; a corresponding set of social policies and institutions built, as far as possible, into such policies; and the required degree of international cooperation for development broadly defined by the recent United Nations conferences. Underpinning all three is the need for suitable institutional support.

The preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives is therefore taking place at a most opportune time. A number of new ideas were brought up at the first organizational session by members, by the Secretariat and by a number of non-governmental organizations, which we see as crucial partners in this

endeavour. It would perhaps be best to reserve these items for more substantive debate at the organizational session next year.

I would like next to turn to the relationship between the United Nations and the international financial centres and institutions. Increased interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the international financial institutions at the intergovernmental level and the strengthening of the policy formulation capacity of the United Nations through the integration of the analytical, normative and operational capacities of the United Nations in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, have begun to address the distance between the normative role of the United Nations, particularly in the social sphere, and the international economic institutions that have a symbiotic relationship with the market. But the distance is still too great. Discussions and decision-making within influential economic and financial institutions and groupings, including the Group of Seven industrialized countries, could also be informed further by the goals of the Social Summit to which we are all committed.

The project of social development occupies that critical area between development, broadly defined, and human rights. The three core issues of social development, as identified by the Social Summit can, and need to be, approached from both the development and human rights perspectives, and indeed may well provide the crucial link between the two. We see a two-way relationship between human rights and development, with participatory democracy as the crucial link. The task of social development, particularly because it involves people as active agents of their destiny, therefore lies at the confluence of democracy, development and human rights, and indeed, at the confluence of the State, the market and civil society. But the most crucial variable undoubtedly remains the role of a cooperative international environment where the interests of developed and developing countries are seen as shared and complementary. A rights-based approach to development ultimately depends greatly on a social and international order in which all these rights and potentialities can be realized.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Hariri (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Three years have elapsed since the Copenhagen Summit and yet the international community has still much to do in the area of social development in all its aspects, particularly as regards its cornerstone, namely the human being, especially in view of the present economic changes, whose effects will be felt in all societies.

Here I wish to emphasize that my delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Indonesia speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Copenhagen Summit was a turning point. It was there that the international community expressed its aspiration to have a better tomorrow for humanity, a future of prosperity, of freedom, free from poverty, illness, destitution, ignorance and other scourges that have beset all nations and societies.

As has clearly been shown in the last three years, social development could not merely be a set of measures. It is also the very pillar of prosperity for society. However the social objectives vary from one country to another, all cultures share in the interest in prosperity for the individual and the smooth functioning of society.

It is on the basis of this awareness that Syria started its overall development process. The aim was to develop the free person, to foster his feeling of his human identity, to enhance his enjoyment of freedom and to develop his personality, which interacts with his objectives and goals. Our policy aimed also at developing the entire potential and resources of our nation so as to increase national income and to raise the living standards of our citizens.

Thus, development plans in my country have led to an increase in the achievements and rates of social development as well as to an increase in services for health, education and social services in the towns and in the countryside. We have also augmented the levels of education, food and health, while decreasing appreciably maternal and infant mortality.

This is all part of our State policy to create an environment that is conducive to creating conditions of social development, including poverty eradication, the total participation of women in development, social integration, the provision of productive employment for people, and the elimination of unemployment. In this respect, Syria has ratified 46 labour conventions, including the convention that has a special provision on women's employment. Likewise, various sectors are being given increased and comprehensive attention. Free education is provided at all levels. It is mandatory at the primary education level and to all citizens without

discrimination. The same applies to health services that are provided by the State free of charge to everyone.

The development plan adopted by my country covers all sectors and we attach the same importance to all areas covered. No segment of the population is excluded from this process.

The Copenhagen Summit adopted a number of commitments, some to be implemented by national Governments and others by the international community. However, we find that three years after that Summit, international cooperation has declined to its lowest mark.

The developed States have not met the obligations that they undertook at the Summit. Thus the developing countries have shouldered their responsibilities despite their limited resources; this did not stop the deterioration of economic and social conditions, and the present state of imbalance has persisted. Therefore, as we look forward to the year 2000, we have to reaffirm the need to follow up on the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the Programme of Action. We have also to stress the importance of international cooperation aiming at national and international social development cooperation based on mutual respect and community of interest. In the context of that cooperation, the developed countries would commit themselves to meeting their obligations adopted in Copenhagen in order to assist in eliminating many of the scourges that are prevalent in all societies, and which have a great impact on them.

Foreign occupation is a great obstacle to social development and social integration. We must stress here that Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan has led to the emigration of nearly half a million Syrian citizens from their territory. During that emigration, they suffered from poverty and various privations. Thus, many women became the breadwinners of their families after their husbands were martyred or arrested. Despite the State's efforts to ensure the minimum living requirements of these people, there is need for more resources, and more expansion of services. Every year Syria is obliged to assume greater responsibilities because of the Israeli occupation, which controls the natural resources of Golan, which it usurps and pillages. The occupation is creating and expanding settlements with the aim of changing the demographic character of the region. Thus the plans and programmes for economic and social development in my country are negatively impacted by this situation.

My delegation participated in the preparatory work for the special session to be held in the year 2000 to follow up the work done in Copenhagen, and we would stress here that we must at all costs see to it that the necessary consultations are completed in order to continue the preparations in complete transparency and with the participation of all in a constructive spirit so that the session will be a success.

This is particularly important since the session will be held at the dawn of a new millennium, which requires it to be a unique session characterized by its future impact on the lives and prosperity of peoples. We hope therefore that the commitments undertaken in Copenhagen will be met in order to ensure effective international cooperation.

We will agree that man's personality is the real wealth of any society, nation and humanity at large. Therefore, we need to take care of it, enable it to attain intellectual horizons and visions suitable for development, and to be coupled with values and ideals to protect it from degradation and delinquency. We should also bestow upon man's personality new skills which would make it capable of adapting to a changing environment and to help it interact with such changes in a positive manner.

All this means that we should act seriously to create a world where relations would be based on understanding and equality — relations that make it possible to create conditions of prosperity and happiness for people, away from poverty and injustice. Our striving should be for a world with no hegemony, colonialism or foreign occupation, a world where man would exercise his fundamental rights as one integrated unity of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights leading to his development and his preparation to play a positive role in society.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset to say that the delegation of Egypt endorses the statement made earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The struggle to promote social development is an important objective in today's world. In addition, the support of efforts to attain social progress and justice,

and to improve the standard of living of people has become an urgent issue, in the light of the rising aspirations of people the world over, and their call for giving high priority to the social aspect of development. These elements are closely interrelated, and are affected by the broader range of social and economic questions, to the point of constituting a holistic and indivisible entity that can have either a positive or a negative impact on international stability, peace and security.

On this basis, Egypt recognizes the importance of social and economic issues, and, like other States that participated in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, has committed itself to making every effort to confront problems in that sphere by creating an economic, political, social, cultural and ecological climate propitious for the attainment of social development, eradicating poverty, expanding employment, combating unemployment and fostering social integration.

Let me here stress two major points. We continue to stress the importance of being guided by them when dealing with questions relating to social development. First, we must respect different cultures and civilizations; nothing can justify imposing one's lifestyle on those who reject it or forcing one's practices on those who do not want them. Secondly, although we concede that the principal, central role in any process of social development should be played by individual Governments, it is also true that success in such governmental efforts depends on a favourable international environment, including factors such as trade, investment, the provision of financial resources, technical assistance and the transfer of technology.

In March, the Secretary-General addressed letters to heads of State or Government, in which, as quoted in paragraph 22 of document A/53/211, he stated that, despite efforts by many Governments to implement the decisions of the Summit, "poverty, unemployment and social disintegration continue to be desperately serious problems which tear at the social fabric of many countries and are often the source of persistent subregional and regional tensions".

On that basis, and at a time when we demand of ourselves and of other States to redouble our efforts in the economic and social sphere, we welcome the reference in the report of the Secretary-General to the continued strong commitment of many Governments to implementing the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and to strengthening the political momentum achieved by that Summit in 1995, by moving forward in formulating national programmes, plans and strategies to promote social development through the elimination of poverty, the creation of jobs, fostering the development of human resources, creating social investment funds and devoting a larger portion of their budgets to the social sector.

In that connection, Egypt submitted a report on its national follow-up of the Copenhagen Summit to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-sixth session. Here, Egypt joined the rest of the international community in exchanging experiences and drawing lessons from one another in this area. Egypt reported that the main elements of its strategy are, first, to ensure as constant as possible an increase in development rates, and consistent support for our efforts in that regard, always mindful of the need to control and slow demographic growth. Secondly, we must make optimal use of all human potential without marginalizing any sector or group, stress human development and promote social consciousness. Thirdly, we must further strengthen democratic practices and maintain the continuity and stability of our constitutional institutions. In this context, we must be committed to legitimacy and the supremacy of law, and must endeavour to protect human rights and public and private freedoms in order to ensure that all citizens effectively participate in running their country's affairs and in decision-making, with a view to achieving social integration.

Let me make special reference to the problem of poverty, which poses one of the main challenges facing contemporary society. All Governments, and the international community as a whole, must redouble their efforts to address this challenge, especially as we are all committed to attaining the goal of eradicating poverty, as a moral, social, political, economic and human obligation incumbent upon us all. Egypt has begun to implement a whole series of integrated policy measures aimed at reducing poverty, promoting human development and achieving a 6 per cent a year increase in our gross national product by the year 2000.

Egypt has seen to it that those with limited incomes increase their participation in work and production through easy credit, professional training, fostering the role of volunteerism and civic society, and strengthening social safety-net — specifically our Social Development Fund. This Fund is no longer confined to minimizing the negative fallout from the economic and social reform process but now aims to support development in the areas of education, literacy, basic social and health services,

family planning, raising living standards and fighting unemployment.

As we begin preparing for a year 2000 special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, which Switzerland has made the generous offer to host, Egypt expresses the hope that the special session will be the focus of serious attention preparation and consensus-building by all to ensure its success. In that connection, we stress that the overriding objective of the session will not be to renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, but to reaffirm them and to evaluate how far we have come in the process of implementing them. The main objective also includes the formulation of recommendations and concrete initiatives to bolster efforts aimed at the full implementation of the results of the Copenhagen Summit.

That will undoubtedly require joint efforts by all parties involved in the preparatory work for the session, at the national, the regional and the international levels. Here I must mention the critical role of all the bodies, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system in the preparations for the year 2000 special session. Nor should I omit mention of the important role of non-governmental organizations and civil society in general in following up and implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action at the national and regional levels.

I wish in conclusion to reaffirm the importance of and interdependence of national, regional and international efforts aiming at bolstering social development in all forms and in all areas. We appeal to all States and Governments to fulfil their commitments in this regard, especially in the areas of mobilizing resources and providing technical assistance to developing countries. Social development is a collective international responsibility that has an impact on our lives and on the future of our world.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The 1995 World Summit for Social Development showed that there was a global consensus that people must be at the centre of our development efforts and an acknowledgement of the close interlinkage between the social and the economic dimensions of development. A central aspect of that consensus is the importance of investing in people's health and education, not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of society at large. Norway is fully committed to the implementation of the outcome of the Summit through action at the local, national and international levels.

The goal of universal access to basic social services cuts across all three key objectives of the Social Summit. Healthy, educated people have a better chance for productive employment and sustainable livelihoods. Only by giving people an opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives can we help break the vicious circle of poverty. Providing access for all to basic education — not least of all for girls — is an effective way to promote social integration.

The Social Summit identified an instrument to facilitate joint action by developed and developing countries towards this goal: the 20/20 Initiative. Norway has taken a special interest in translating it into action. In April 1996, representatives of 38 Governments and 10 multilateral organizations met in Oslo to review strategies and modalities to implement this initiative. A comprehensive analysis of the 20/20 Initiative and its potential was undertaken, and the outcome of the meeting is reflected in the Oslo Consensus on 20/20.

Later this month, as mentioned by the representative of Viet Nam, government representatives and other key actors will again gather, in Hanoi, to take stock of the progress made since the Oslo meeting and to discuss ways and means of bringing the Initiative further ahead. Together with the Government of the Netherlands, we are pleased to sponsor the Hanoi meeting, and we hope that it will bring us closer to the goal of universal access to basic social services.

In addition to our mutual commitment along the lines of the 20/20 Initiative, another long-standing target needs a reaffirmed commitment by developed countries: the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. It is regrettable that industrialized countries are increasingly distancing themselves from this target. Norway, which has been well above this target for decades, is actively seeking to counter the growing donor fatigue and intends to further increase its own official development assistance in the years ahead.

For the poorest and most heavily indebted developing countries the debt problem represents one of the main obstacles to development. Urgent action is needed to end the unsustainable debt burden of these countries. The Norwegian Government has launched a comprehensive national debt relief strategy as a contribution towards this end. Its objective is to enable these countries to enter the next millennium with a debt situation that is not an impediment to economic and social

development. The strategy includes concrete proposals on how Norway can support and strengthen multilateral mechanisms already in place. As part of the strategy, Norway will grant unilateral debt reductions on a case-by-case basis on top of the reductions made under multilateral operations.

The number of children being exploited through child labour seems to be on the increase. The girl child is particularly vulnerable, although her labour is often less visible. The financial crisis currently affecting many countries is magnifying the problem. The AIDS epidemic adds to this burden by leaving many children with an uncertain future as orphans needing to fend for themselves. These challenges need to be met by action. The Norwegian Government gives high priority to this work, which we see as both a human rights issue and a development issue.

Almost a year has passed since the International Conference on Child Labour in Oslo, where 40 countries agreed on an Agenda for Action on Child Labour. This Agenda points out a number of factors that can help eliminate child labour over time. Access to education, appropriate legislation and mobilization of civil society are all keys to bringing about change, as is support for community action designed to reduce the burdens of working children. We should now focus on how to promote and support the development of national plans of action in countries that experience child labour problems and that are committed to this process.

Enabling people with disabilities to participate fully and actively in society is an important part of our efforts to create a society for all. The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is a key tool towards this end. Priority areas for action should be to ensure accessibility, equality and full participation in society for people with disabilities and to facilitate their participation in planning and policy-making.

The decision to designate 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons has been warmly welcomed in Norway, both by the Government and by the numerous Norwegian non-governmental organizations working in the field of older people. A national committee has been established. Some key topics for our celebration of the Year will be the rights of older people, appropriate care, lifelong learning and solidarity between generations.

Norway will take an active part in the preparatory process leading up to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000. The purpose of the special session must be to review the implementation of the results of the Summit, but also to consider further actions and initiatives. In this process we must encourage contributions from all relevant actors, not least from the community of non-governmental organizations and other parts of civil society.

In his recent address to the General Assembly, our Secretary-General expressed his happiness about the fruitful cooperation over the past year between the United Nations and non-State actors, in particular in the processes leading up to the Convention on anti-personnel landmines and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. These positive experiences should be built upon in our preparations for the special session.

Mr. Bamba (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to state at the outset that Côte d'Ivoire associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

When the heads of State or Government adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action in March 1995 no one could have predicted that a serious financial crisis linked to globalization, whose shock waves are still spreading, would completely call into question — at least as far as some countries are concerned — the reasonable expectations for economic growth and social progress.

The social consequences of this crisis are disastrous. Daily in the hardest hit countries 15,000 people are losing their jobs, thus swelling the ranks of the poor and the marginalized. Social safety nets, stretched to the limit, are proving unable to meet the growing needs of those stripped of their livelihood.

Faced with this unprecedented challenge, the developing countries, in particular those in Africa, are seeing the flow of external resources dry up, especially in terms of official development assistance, while the already unbearable external debt burden only grows heavier.

Such a situation is cause for concern and casts a pall of uncertainty over the commitments entered into at Copenhagen and at other major international conferences. We should not become discouraged, however. What we should do is review our strategies and attune our policies

in order to make the human person, more than ever, the focus of development.

My delegation in this connection pays tribute to the work of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, which, by emphasizing the Human Development Index, have focused attention on social indicators such as education, health, drinking-water availability and improved basic social services. It is up all of us, together with the expertise of the bilateral and multilateral development agencies, to investigate ways of raising or at least maintaining the level of social indicators for our peoples.

Among the questions before our Assembly is one that we believe to be key: what measures we must envisage to weave a social safety net for our peoples in general, and for the most vulnerable among them in particular, in order to guarantee for them, the crisis notwithstanding, access to basic social services.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has always, in its efforts, placed the full development of people's potential at centre stage. The President of the Republic clearly spelled out this basic concern in his policy address of 26 August 1995:

> "To bring about a more homogenous society, in particular through steps designed to improve quickly and substantially the living conditions of the most disadvantaged in terms of housing, health, education and basic conditions of life in both rural and urban areas."

He is speaking here of the third track of the presidential programme, whose implementation resulted in increased social investment, reflecting the irrevocable commitment of our Government to reaching, for its part, the goals set at the Copenhagen Summit.

I would stress that the relevant steps are being taken within a well thought out framework that is based on a national programme to fight poverty adopted in June 1997.

In the educational field, the investment budget went from 16 billion CFA francs ($32 million) in 1992 to 35 billion CFA francs ($70 million) in 1997 — a nearly 100 per cent increase in the space of five years. It is noteworthy here that elementary school expenditures account for 45 per cent of the overall educational budget. Moreover, 968 elementary schoolrooms were built over the period 1993 through 1997, 49 per cent of them in rural areas. This resulted in an increase in the rate of enrolment from 67 per cent in 1992 to 72 per cent in 1997.

Altogether, for the period 1994 through 2001, we anticipate the construction of 5,000 new classrooms and the refurbishing of 6,000 more, requiring investments totalling almost 50 billion CFA francs ($100 million).

In the areas of housing and basic living conditions, the Government is undertaking to build low-income housing, rebuild run-down neighbourhoods and expand social infrastructures. These steps will be buttressed by a major housing programme, involving 12,000 low-income units, that will involve projects initiated by the Government and carried out by the private sector in 1998 and 1999.

At the village level, 1,330 housing units were built in 1997, versus 190 in 1994 and 1996.

As concerns hydraulics and the improvement of basic social services, we have acted to ensure a reliable supply of drinking water in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas, 37 drinking-water distribution centres were built from 1995 through 1997, and in rural areas 1,188 wells were drilled, resulting in one water-supply system for every 580 inhabitants.

In the health-care field, which has always been a priority concern for the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, a number of steps have been taken to improve our people's access to basic health care. The strategy designed to translate all of this into reality involves the continued restoration of existing infrastructures and the construction of new health centres. As a result, three major university and regional hospital centres were refurbished and equipped, and some 40 new dispensaries were built in the capital as well as in the rest of the country.

Moreover, these steps are being complemented on the one hand by the implementation and restructuring of major health programmes concerning, *inter alia*, AIDS, an expanded vaccination programme, Buruli's ulcer and Guinea worm, and on the other hand stepped-up training for health-care personnel.

Since 1994 the public funds allocated to health care have consistently increased, reaching 99 billion CFA francs ($198 million) in 1997. The result of this policy has been a significant improvement in nationwide health care coverage, as the following figures demonstrate.

There was one rural dispensary for every 9,331 inhabitants in 1997, as against one for every 11,931 in 1994 — an increase in the number of dispensaries from 532 to 750 for the period in question. There was also one maternity hospital for every 8,613 women of childbearing age in 1997, versus one for every 15,394 in 1994, reflecting an increase in the number of such facilities from 190 to 384 for that period. Furthermore, there is now one physician for every 9,000 inhabitants, versus one for every 11,111 in 1988. And the immunization rate went from 60 per cent in 1996 to 70 per cent in 1997, which trend should allow us by the year 2000 to wipe out polio and neonatal tetanus as well as to check the spread of leprosy.

Our Government's efforts also have centred not only on regularly supplying public health facilities with medication but also on driving down the cost of that medication, in particular by promoting generic medicines, increasing medication imports and facilitating the establishment of pharmaceutical plants.

Given the current globalization-dominated context, which I have already touched on, Côte d'Ivoire does not intend to wage alone the fight to improve our people's health. On the contrary, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire is determined to wage that fight within the framework of an active regional solidarity and international cooperation.

This determination reaches the very highest level, as demonstrated by the personal involvement of the head of State of Côte d'Ivoire, who himself has launched several initiatives and taken a number of steps towards better health in Africa and throughout the world.

President Bédié, who was Africa's representative at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the World Health Organization, in addressing that body called to mind the serious economic and financial crisis and its unfavourable impact on the social sectors in general and on health in particular. He listed the health-care challenges facing Africa, stressing major new problems such as AIDS and Buruli's ulcer. Finally he exhorted all countries to endeavour in a spirit of national and international solidarity so that better health for all in the twenty-first century can become a reality.

He also highlighted the connection between poverty and health; the impact of globalized trade and of technology on health; the effectiveness of cooperation in the field of international health care and how non-health-related factors impede the advancement of health care at the international level; the relationship between health and development; and the relationship between the free-market system and universal access to care.

Another example of Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to better health at the regional level was the initiative of the Ivorian President at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in June 1998 in Ougadougou to propose the creation of an African fund to fight AIDS and to take all necessary steps to ensure the launching of the African initiative against malaria. The heads of State or Government of the OAU hailed this initiative and adopted two resolutions designed to step up the fight against these two major scourges that are visiting suffering and death upon Africa.

So far as the difficulties Africans face in obtaining anti-retrovirus treatment, the Ivorian President called attention to the fact that it is a flagrant injustice that access to such treatments varies according to the level of economic development. Chosen along with Uganda, Chile and Viet Nam to participate in the pilot phase of the UNAIDS initiative regarding access to anti-retrovirus treatments, Côte d'Ivoire has tirelessly sought to win over new partners, such as the European Union and major pharmaceutical companies of the northern hemisphere. These efforts, combined with those of other development partners made possible the launching of the initiative in August of this year.

As a sign of its commitment, Côte d'Ivoire has established a fund of 600 million CFA francs for the initiative. Thus, in conjunction with other African countries and development partners, we have prepared the way to fight with new vigour and solidarity against this disease, the diverse effects of which spare no nation.

African countries must be assisted in their efforts to ensure the provision of basic social services and to live up to the commitments they made at the Social Summit: to wipe out poverty, fight unemployment and ensure the social integration of marginalized people.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm here the appeal the Secretary-General made to the member States of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development — to take vigorous action for Africa in the following five priority areas: first, increasing the volume and quality of official development assistance to Africa; secondly, converting into grants the entire outstanding balance of the official debts of the poorest African countries; thirdly, expanding access to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative;

fourthly, opening markets to African exports and facilitating African countries' access to them; and fifthly, encouraging investment in Africa.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): The 1995 World Summit for Social Development can be put on the list of major global events of the last decade. It was at that forum that concrete targets and collective commitments aimed at ensuring social progress and better living conditions were defined. The commitments made in Copenhagen represent solemn pledges which, though not legally binding, constitute strong ethical and moral imperatives.

The statements made yesterday and today by previous speakers have vividly demonstrated the continued adherence of Member States to the fulfilment of obligations they undertook in Copenhagen. At the same time, many representatives outlined problems and difficulties that prove that the follow-up to the 1995 World Summit has been far from satisfactory.

In his letter to the Secretary-General in May this year, the President of Ukraine shared the Secretary-General's concern that

> "poverty, unemployment and social disintegration continue to be desperately serious problems which tear at the social fabric of many countries and are often the source of persistent subregional and regional tensions". (*A/53/211, para. 22*)

To address these problems effectively, the President of Ukraine emphasized that much more was required, through national action as well as international cooperation.

It was widely acknowledged in the course of the recent general debate that the main feature of the present stage of development of the world community is the globalization of political, social, economic and humanitarian life. On the one hand, recent years have been marked by some of the negative effects of globalization. The financial crises in Asia and in Russia, whose repercussions have been acutely felt all over the world, serve as the most recent example of this.

On the other hand, a great advantage of globalization is the opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other's achievements and difficulties, to promote an exchange of new ideas and to resolve problems of individual regions and countries by taking advantage of the world's best experience.

The special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives, to be held in the year 2000, will become a timely test for all of us as regards the capability of the international community as a whole and of individual Member States to respond effectively to the challenges of today.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General, in document A/53/211, and fully support the opinion that, among the main goals of the special session should be to reaffirm and not to renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as to review their implementation since 1995. While assessing national, regional and global initiatives elaborated in this regard, the special session should pay additional attention to the impact of globalization; to an integrated approach to poverty eradication; to the promotion of full employment and of social integration based on the enhancement and protection of human rights; and to the creation of an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to enhance their social development.

In our opinion, the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session has laid down a good basis for further work in this direction. Our delegation is pleased by the growing role in this process of the Commission for Social Development. We would also like to note the combined efforts aimed at streamlining the Summit follow-up made by the wide range of different bodies of the United Nations system — in particular, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the Bretton Woods institutions — as well as the active involvement of non-governmental organizations to this end.

We welcome the initiative of the Government of Switzerland to host the special session in the year 2000 in Geneva. We also highly appreciate its readiness to assist those countries that do not have representatives in Geneva.

The implementation of the decisions of the Copenhagen Summit remains a very important component of Ukraine's strategy in the area of social development. The President and the Government of Ukraine are making every effort to ensure the successful realization of the relevant national programme and of a number of legislative acts. The objective is to create a system of

social relationships adapted to the current market conditions and environment; promote social integration, social justice, equal rights and opportunities for all; and ensure the rights of national minorities. The most recent step towards this end is the establishment of the national committee in charge of the implementation of the goals of the International Year of Older Persons.

The Government of Ukraine continues to focus its efforts on solving the problems of youth, women, children, the disabled and other vulnerable groups of the population, who should not be consigned to the margins of society by the social and economic difficulties of an economy in transition.

Ukraine will continue to strictly adhere to its Copenhagen commitments and will take an active part in the process of preparing for the special session of the General Assembly.

We believe that the consolidation of efforts by all Member States aimed at overcoming the existing problems and at creating an environment for further economic and social progress will help achieve the goals of the World Social Summit. In this regard, I would like to quote the well-known British statesman and novelist, Benjamin Disraeli, who wrote more than a century ago, "The secret of success is constancy to purpose." We are persistent in our will to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Copenhagen Summit in the interests of and to the benefit of the whole of humankind.

Mr. Shahid (Bangladesh): The international community identified ways and means of addressing the challenges of social development at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995. We now look forward to the year 2000, when we shall review the progress achieved in implementing the outcome of the Summit.

The current global economic instability has had adverse consequences for societies. Measures for attaining social development have stalled as a result. The least developed countries have suffered most. Their inadequate resource base has put them in a most difficult situation to continue their efforts for social development. Social disintegration, endemic poverty, lack of employment and weak safety nets for vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly have compounded the problem further. Their collective impact may result in a developmental crisis which will hurt the weak and the marginalized.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. We fully endorse the statement of the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Given the time constraint, we would like to flag a few issues of specific concern to us.

First, it is clear that although measures have been taken at the national, regional and international levels, much more remains to be done for the complete implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. The Secretary-General also raised this matter in his report. We believe that the best way to progress is to ensure that social issues are not overshadowed by economic ones, given the present global financial instability. We must not sacrifice those at the periphery in our efforts to engineer a speedy global economic revival.

Secondly, for implementing the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit at the national level, innovative measures are needed. In our efforts for poverty eradication and social development, we have seen the usefulness of micro-credit as a tool. It has not only addressed issues of poverty, but by increasing economic activity, it has also generated employment. By empowering women, it has had a number of fallout effects, including better sanitation and hygiene, increase in the number of schoolgoing children and more caloric intake.

Thirdly, while it is primarily the responsibility of national Governments to implement the commitments made at the Summit, it is also clear that without international cooperation and assistance, it will not be possible to do so. The United Nations has a critical role to play in this regard, and the Secretary-General's report highlights the United Nations system-wide follow-up to the Summit in this regard. We believe that the United Nations must focus on inter-agency cooperation to address the issues in a focused manner, avoid duplication and increase the allocation of resources for country level and regional level follow-up and implementation. All relevant organizations of the United Nations system should also prioritize their respective programmes with the objective of the speedy implementation of the outcome.

Fourthly, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund must prioritize social development and allocate substantial resources for this purpose. If the

social sectors are neglected, the result will be social strife and unrest, which may result in more instability.

Fifthly, the participation of civil society as partners of Governments will significantly contribute to the implementation of the commitments made at Copenhagen. The grass-roots approach of civil society will complement the Government's role of policy-setting, coordination and overall supervision of the implementation process. A strong and accountable civil society can greatly help reduce poverty, create employment and increase social cohesion.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives in the year 2000. We also thank the Government of Switzerland for its offer to hold the special session in the year 2000 in Geneva.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation wishes to associate itself fully with the statement made by the representative of the Group of 77 and China.

As I emphasized yesterday in the Third Committee, the question of social development is one of the major issues facing humanity in the last years of this century. It will be one of the vital priorities of the international community at the beginning of the twenty-first century, precisely because social issues are people, and people are at the beginning and at the end of any concept of development.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, rallied a broad consensus around the essential need to refocus national priorities and the agenda of our Organization on questions of human development. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development adopted at the Summit remain today our common reference points for elaborating and implementing social policies. Given their relevance and their timeliness, made even more obvious today by the financial crisis in Asia and its unexpected repercussions in other parts of the world, Senegal does not believe that they need to be renegotiated.

As the Preparatory Committee for the special session in the year 2000 recommends, we need to reaffirm the Copenhagen consensus, critically to assess its implementation and adopt concrete and pragmatic recommendations conducive to the effective and coordinated implementation of the 10 commitments undertaken by our Governments.

My delegation is pleased by the high quality of the reports submitted to us on the preparation for the special session in the year 2000 on follow-up to Copenhagen. The Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit and the report of the Preparatory Committee convinced me that the United Nations is determined to do everything to assure that Copenhagen +5 does not become a replay of the Summit, but that it should serve as a spearhead for giving new impetus to the process already under way to effectively implement the Declaration and Programme of Action.

In this respect, my delegation welcomes the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to host the special session in the year 2000 at Geneva. My country enjoys excellent relations with the Government of Switzerland and is convinced that that friendly country will do its all to ensure that the special session convenes in the best possible conditions.

The social crisis that arose in the early 1990s, and the anxiety and sense of impotence it provoked, made it necessary for the States Members of the United Nations to convene the World Summit for Social Development. Despite the scope of measures adopted three years ago, it has become clear today that poverty, far from diminishing, has increased in certain countries or regions of the world, in the South and the North alike. Social conflicts have not ebbed. Social insecurity, fear for the future and the shortage or absence of jobs, particularly for the young, remain major concerns for all our countries. The gap is widening between rich and poor countries and, within the wealthy countries, between rich and poor citizens. The solution to social problems is beyond the means and measures of any single Government alone. Official development assistance is plummeting from year to year. The goal of integrating women and the elderly as full members of society remains unattained. The vulnerability of children and the failure to take into account their rights, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, remains a serious challenge to the entire international community.

The picture I have just painted is reflected in various documents of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development and in other studies conducted by United Nations agencies. The picture is hardly pretty, especially since, in some regions of the world, particularly in Africa, civil wars and other inter-

State conflicts are creating tens of thousands, even tens of millions, of newly marginalized people.

The *Human Development Report 1998* states that more than a billion people are unable to meet their basic consumption needs, that 60 per cent of the 4.5 billion inhabitants of the developing countries are without basic health facilities and that almost a third of these have no access to drinking water.

Humanity only raises problems that it can resolve and I have no doubt that it does have the resources necessary to defeat malnutrition and hunger, to guarantee a decent life to every man and woman, and to build a balanced society of mutual assistance and solidarity. The international community has the means to do this. It has the ability to do this. It must have the generosity to do this.

Even if the primary responsibility for implementing the outcome of Copenhagen falls first to each Government, it is highly important that the United Nations, through its system, and other development partners strengthen their assistance to poor countries. I know that the United Nations Development Programme, like the World Bank, is currently seeking to refocus its activities on poverty eradication, while taking into account other important programming sectors, such as gender parity, productive employment, good governance, sustainable development and the conservation and improvement of the environment.

Other funds, programmes and agencies, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations, are also striving, in their respective fields of competence, to implement the outcome of Copenhagen by reorienting and refocusing their activities on questions of vulnerability, social integration and poverty eradication.

It is therefore important, in this dynamic context, that emphasis be placed on national and local capacity-building, promoting productive employment and lowering unemployment, promoting a micro-credit system, and improving access to basic social services for all. In a word, greater priority must be placed on promoting social investments and the social dimension of adjustment and economic, monetary and financial restructuring programmes.

My country, Senegal, which enjoys excellent cooperation with the United Nations system, has drafted, in cooperation with its development partners, a national poverty eradication programme. We are trying to implement it with our own budgetary resources and those provided by friendly countries and international institutions. The strategic guidelines of Senegal's ninth national plan for economic and social development gives priority national interest to poverty eradication. Poverty and its eradication remain major challenges that must be met during the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

To that end, we must develop an integrated and innovative holistic approach that takes into due account the role of values in formulating national social policy. Ultimately, we must develop and implement a political culture of social progress, peace and democracy.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express the hope that the special session to be held in the year 2000 will help us to attain this noble goal, which we all share.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to join those who supported the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Iraq has always been keen on participating in the deliberations under this agenda item for many reasons. First and foremost, this item is of particular interest and importance to developing countries because it relates to an important part of the process of comprehensive development. Furthermore, Iraq faces a critical situation brought about by the harsh circumstances resulting from the economic sanctions which have been in effect for over eight years. Because of this, the development process in Iraq has faced many burdens. This is because Iraq must respond to the traditional tasks required by the development process in any developing country, while at the same time devising plans to alleviate the destructive effects of the sanctions in all areas of life.

At its fifty-second session the General Assembly affirmed the need for renewed political will on the national, regional and international levels to realize the goals of social development. Governments were urged to put in place or promote comprehensive strategies to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. In this respect, we must emphasize some important facts. Realization of development requires the provision of two critical and basic elements, as well as the political will of the State and its genuine desire to realize development. These factors are financial resources and international cooperation. Because of the acts of aggression committed against Iraq on 17 September 1991 and because of the continued economic embargo against

it, Iraq has been deprived of financial resources. On the other hand, the sanctions have created basic obstacles at the level of international economic and developmental cooperation. Thus, Iraq has been deprived of all basic factors needed for any development, irrespective of shape or size.

Undoubtedly the rights to health and education are the cornerstones of social development. Without preserving and developing these cornerstones, no country can claim to have taken important steps on the road of social development. In this context, I wish to address some facts concerning the health and economic situation in Iraq. The ongoing embargo has led to a deterioration in health services in terms of prevention and treatment, particularly with regard to programmes of primary medical care, nutrition, maternity, prenatal care, combating disease, environmental health, family care and planning, social psychological care and special programmes for the disabled. In the area of family planning, the reproductive health project was adversely affected by the failure to date to provide the special equipment needed and provided for by the International Family Planning Federation to the Iraqi Society for Family Planning of 1997.

It has been impossible to provide more than 18 per cent of the services needed by the target audience, representing the sector which is most in need of services in the field of family planning and reproductive health. In addition, there has been a sharp decline in the level of services because of the near total destruction of clean water systems and pumping stations in the war. What remained was eventually destroyed because of the embargo, due to the lack of spare parts needed to maintain those stations and the scarcity of chlorine and other purifiers.

As regards education, this sector has also deteriorated because of the shortage in the most rudimentary requirements for education. There is a shortage of pencils used by students in their studies. There is a shortage of over 650,000 desks because there are no raw materials to make them. We have also have shortages in schoolbooks, of which 40 million are needed. More than 9,000 schools require restoration or maintenance. Other needs are also difficult to provide, like writing boards, chalk and notebooks. Due to the ongoing embargo, the expansion plan for school construction, which included building 3,973 new schools between 1990 and 1996, came to a complete halt. All of this has led to a widespread drop-out rate and to other behaviour problems. More than 500,000 students have dropped out of schools since 1995. The number of those who have deserted the education workforce has reached 12,373.

Because of the ongoing embargo there are also new challenges that women must face, the most important of which is having to provide for their families and catering to their needs by doing marginal non-productive work. That has adversely affected women's productive social activities outside the home and has led to a deterioration in their societal role.

These are some of the symptoms that prevent the realization of social development in Iraq. It should be mentioned here that resolution 52/136 reaffirmed the importance of the right to development as an integral part of fundamental human rights for every human person and for all peoples in all countries, particularly the developing countries. The resolution calls on all Member States to make further concrete efforts at the national and international levels to eliminate all obstacles to the realization of the right to development.

Accordingly, the international community, which took upon itself a commitment under the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action to promote a world environment favourable to realizing social development, is duty-bound to address the destructive direct or indirect effects of sanctions on the economic and social infrastructures of targeted countries, where the first victim is the development process, particularly as we are about to evaluate the achievements and follow up the results of the Copenhagen Summit. The first step towards the realization of social development in Iraq must be the lifting of the economic sanctions that have no legal, humanitarian or ethical justification whatsoever, particularly since Iraq has fulfilled all its obligations under the Security Council resolutions. This will enable Iraq to provide the necessary elements that will lead to accelerated and comprehensive social development. Iraq will then be able to compensate for the destructive effects of the embargo.

Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, to join those who have spoken before me in addressing my thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General. Indeed, his report on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 is replete with invaluable signposts which provide a useful framework for our deliberations. I would also like to express my support for the statements on these issues

made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Social Summit marked a milestone in relationships of international cooperation for development, offering the world an overall vision of the multidimensional nature of world social development on the eve of the twenty-first century. Notwithstanding the commitments made by heads of State or Government that found their way into the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in Copenhagen, which included a priority list of actions to be taken collectively by the international community to ensure social integration, prosperity and happiness, the efforts exerted up to now at national, regional and international levels through the Economic and Social Council and various international programmes, as well as through the Commission for Social Development to ensure proper follow-up on these priorities, have not yet achieved the qualitative shift desired for the improvement in the social situation of the world today. The world situation today has resulted from the widening economic, social and cultural gap between developed and developing countries.

The advantages of globalization and liberalization of economies which have marked international relations in recent years are still beyond attainment for most peoples of developing countries. This is due to their growing exposure to the problems of malnutrition, disease, unemployment, serious ecological crises, the external debt burden, violence, drug abuse, discrimination and injustice, as well as the many other challenges of deep poverty which afflict the 1.3 billion people who lack the simplest and most elementary social services, such as basic food supplies, drinking water, housing, safety, health, education, security and the like.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates has fully supported follow-through on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in Copenhagen, which, as we see it, reflects a pragmatic approach needed to ensure increased worldwide awareness of the nature of these social problems at present. My delegation feels, accordingly, that an across-the-board implementation of this programme requires us to take a determined approach in international and regional cooperative relations in order to adopt better policies for social development based upon concepts of genuine partnership and of burden-sharing within their larger scopes. Thus will we be able to expand development aid for developing countries and arrangements for the exchange of scientific and technological experiences, and for trade and investment, either through bilateral or multilateral channels. This will contribute to enabling the developing countries to improve their ability to deal successfully with the globalization of development. In this context, we should also call for joining our efforts to create the appropriate machinery to address our shared concerns relating to the family, children, women, the aged, the handicapped, the provision of proper educational and health services and the like.

It is our feeling that the armed conflicts afflicting many different parts of the world are serious challenges to social development. Indeed, they are a major source of the proliferation of many other complex transnational problems, such as organized crime, illegal trafficking in arms and narcotic drugs, money-laundering and the like. We therefore support the recommendations of the Commission for Social Development designed to strengthen international partnership in order to meet these challenges. This would be accomplished through finding alternative ways to development, developing human resources and a productive workforce, reducing unemployment and improving the quality of social services for all sectors of societies, on the basis of sustainability and justice.

We look forward to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 to take stock of the achievements in following through on Copenhagen. In this connection, we stress the need and importance of strengthening the role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in dealing more effectively with these areas, especially the humanitarian, economic and social arenas.

The United Arab Emirates participated actively in the World Summit in Copenhagen and, in response to the recommendations of that important conference, has been keen on strengthening our national development strategies and updating some of our legislation and developmental and social activities. All this is in keeping with our aspirations to develop our human resources and to ensure a decent living standard for the individual as a maker and beneficiary of development. In this respect, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, head of State of the United Arab Emirates, has expressed our determination to improve health services, training and education and to implement programmes for social interdependence to help the handicapped, orphans and the aged and to ensure that they are better integrated into the mainstream of society. These programmes will also improve their participation in building society, while strengthening the concepts of family and societal unity and cohesion, taking account of

the particularities of our own customs and the traditions of our heritage and the teachings of Islam.

By the same token, our Government has made a point of giving women a unique place in the realm of national development, because they are the pillars of our society. We have also sought to strengthen grass-roots and community-based partnership, especially between public interest and private sector organizations, in the implementation of many policies and national programmes. This is in addition to the provision of job opportunities on an equitable basis to men and women alike. We are pursuing implementation of our plans to develop remote rural areas and link them to urban areas by providing them with electric power, water, adequate housing and the like across our country.

We are also working hand in hand with bilateral, regional and international partners in development. Thus, we have contributed to financing many socio-economic development projects in a number of other developing countries, granting some of them concessionary loans to enable them, in turn, to meet their own needs for basic social services. We have also hosted a number of international colloquiums, seminars, conferences and training workshops designed to deal with social, environmental, housing and other developmental issues.

In conclusion, we believe that social development is a firm commitment which has been affirmed by various covenants and agreements, foremost among which is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We must take concerted action to realize the aspirations expressed in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, which are designed to bring about justice and to improve the lot of many millions of people throughout the world.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): As this is the first time that I have had the honour of addressing the General Assembly at this session, I would like to take this opportunity to express my congratulations to Minister Didier Opertti upon his election. I am confident that he will very successfully guide the deliberations of the Assembly.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was the first major United Nations conference specifically on social development issues. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Summit represent a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. It was the largest ever gathering of world leaders with the common goal of addressing social issues, fighting poverty, creating productive jobs and making a stable, safe and just society. The presence of 117 heads of State or Government gave immense political weight to the final conclusions.

The Summit's goals of eliminating inequality within and among States were designed to create stability and security in the world, which would lead to lasting peace. In this noble endeavour it is necessary to focus not only on social and economic development but on the full spectrum of development, which includes full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In this light, it should be noted that social development requires an integrated approach and involves implementation of the conclusions of all the global conferences — those of Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul.

At this juncture, almost four years after the holding of the Social Summit, we need to seriously evaluate whether enough has been done to implement the commitments made at the Summit, as well as to explore ways to proceed further in order to accomplish the goals set at Copenhagen.

Social problems are still spread across the entire world, and it is obvious that they cannot be the exclusive responsibility of national Governments. Rather, they require global attention and action. Not even the most developed States are immune to the problems of social development, poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Some countries can cope with those problems on their own, but most need the assistance and cooperation of the international community.

Unfortunately, while there have been some national and collective efforts, including those of the United Nations system, to fulfil the commitments made in Copenhagen, much remains to be done. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General,

> "it is clear that far more extensive and effective action is required at the international, regional and national levels to tackle the desperately serious problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration faced by most countries". (*A/53/211, para. 78*)

Let me reiterate that it states "by most countries".

Poverty, instead of being reduced, has actually increased since the holding of the Summit. In addition, only a handful of countries have achieved or surpassed the target of applying 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance, as called for in Copenhagen.

Although we are well aware that it is the least developed countries which need the greatest assistance for social development, countries with economies in transition also require international cooperation. The changes in the economic system in these countries affected all other aspects of social development and increased unemployment and poverty among certain segments of society. We wish to stress that dissatisfaction and frustration in these countries could eventually exact a much higher price from the international community than the amount of temporary assistance now needed to put economic and social development in those countries on the right track.

From the point of view of the flow of international assistance, the Republic of Croatia, as a Central European and Mediterranean country, should belong to the category of donor States. However, the costs and consequences not only of transition but also of the war of aggression which was conducted against it were such that Croatia is still not in a position to assume that role.

On the national level, the Republic of Croatia has undertaken numerous measures designed to implement the commitments of the Social Summit. Croatia has instituted a National Employment Policy, which consists of various measures designed to decrease unemployment and underemployment, decrease labour costs, increase labour mobility and improve cooperation between the Government, employers and the unions in creating jobs.

The policy includes activities by the National Employment Agency, in cooperation with employers, to organize training programmes for the unemployed in line with the needs of, and changes in, the labour market. Attention is being paid to the needs of specific groups, such as the young and long-term unemployed. In keeping with the Summit's goal of equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities, the National Employment Agency has special programmes for the disabled. The policy also includes measures to stimulate self-employment by providing credit, organizing seminars on establishing a business and providing analysis of the lines of business which provide the best opportunities for self-employment in various localities.

In keeping with the Social Summit's commitment to equality for women, the Croatian Government has established the National Policy for the Promotion of Equality. As part of this policy, measures have been established which are to be undertaken by the year 2000 by Government bodies, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, for the purpose of improving the economic position of women and their greater participation at all levels of political life. This also constitutes implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Croatian Government has also established the National Programme of Action for Children. The eventual goals of this programme are to guarantee free and healthy food for children under three years old in pre-school programmes, to eliminate taxes for children's clothing and food and to ensure adequate living conditions for all families. In the field of health, the programme is designed to provide free health care for children and special departments and services for child rehabilitation, especially for those children with developmental problems. In addition, health guidance clinics for children are to be established, and the Government will actively promote the healthy upbringing of children and young people.

The National Programme of Action for Children, in conjunction with the National Employment Policy and special measures for the advancement, upbringing, education and social security of children, is designed to help eliminate poverty, one of the major aims of the Summit.

In meeting its commitments made at Copenhagen, as well as facilitating its social development, Croatia will be greatly assisted by the scheduled pledging conference for development and reconstruction, which the international community is planning to conduct in Croatia.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that increasing global interdependence requires increased international solidarity to fulfil the commitments of the Social Summit to eradicate poverty, provide productive employment and promote social integration.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of the Philippines.

Mrs. Lacanlale (Philippines): When our leaders crafted the landmark document on social development in March 1995 at the Copenhagen Summit, they already

envisioned a review mechanism to ensure full implementation of commitments. Thus, General Assembly resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995 simply mirrored that sentiment when it decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. And our Heads of States or Governments expect no less than the plenary of the Assembly to take full charge in ensuring adequate preparations for a successful review session in the year 2000.

My delegation is fully satisfied with the preparations undertaken thus far. The Assembly has laid out clearly in its resolutions 51/202 and 52/25 the principal considerations that should guide the preparatory process and the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000.

We fully agree that the mandated role of the Commission for Social Development should remain intact and that, as a functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council, it has the primary responsibility for the follow-up to the Summit and review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. We are gratified to note that the Commission for Social Development has indeed discharged its mandate accordingly and that a practical link has been established through the designation of its Chairman as ex officio in the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee.

My delegation expects that on the basis of various inputs, particularly from the Commission for Social Development, the Preparatory Committee could then initiate its substantive activities in 1999. In this regard, it is critical to ensure that agreed conclusions of the Commission, particularly on the priority themes for 1998 on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons, and on the priority themes for 1999 on social services for all, find concrete expression in enriching the preparatory process for the special session.

It is equally important that the international community continue to address the two other core issues on poverty and unemployment to ensure that the pertinent commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit are fulfilled and that countries are indeed serious in meeting their respective obligations under the Declaration and Programme of Action.

The preparatory process should, at the same time, seek more opportunities that can bring about the implementation of commitments made at Copenhagen. It must not be limited to activities or meetings which are, by themselves, part and parcel of the preparatory process. Supportive meetings and other related activities must be organized to raise awareness for the immediate implementation of commitments made at Copenhagen. Such support activities could highlight the role of the United Nations system and the participation of non-governmental organizations, as well as civil society. Relevant national or regional activities could also be arranged and coordinated to ensure maximum political momentum for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The Secretariat should be able to provide the required assistance for the arrangement and coordination of such activities.

It is clear to us that the principal objective of the special session is to reaffirm and not to renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The special session can then review the implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action and recommend further concrete actions and initiatives that will contribute to a full and effective implementation of commitments. This Assembly must confirm such an understanding lest we put the preparatory process and the special session in disarray. The decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its organizational meeting in May this year were very explicit in this regard.

It is very important that Member countries accord the fullest support to the work of the Preparatory Committee to ensure adequate preparation for the special session of the General Assembly. This means that Member States should be actively involved in the Commission for Social Development, since this is the body that will carry most of the burden in initiating substantive inputs for the Preparatory Committee. The Commission has been entrusted with the responsibility of acting as the forum for national reporting and for identifying areas where further initiatives are needed for consideration by the Preparatory Committee.

We also expect the Commission to have the first opportunity to examine the various inputs requested from the Secretary-General in the decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its organizational session. I refer to the general guidelines, structure and common framework for national reporting which the Secretary-General was requested to formulate. I also refer to a report focusing on the implementation of the 10

commitments, including the three core issues, at the national, regional and international levels, which will be made available to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee from 17 to 28 May 1999. The thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development in February 1999 must have every opportunity to examine such reports so that appropriate inputs are subsequently provided to the Preparatory Committee.

My delegation hopes that the requested reports are completed in due time and that delegations are given an opportunity to examine them so that effective contributions are made to the work of the Commission for Social Development and, subsequently, to the Preparatory Committee.

It is obvious that far more extensive and effective action is required at the international, regional, and national levels to confront the serious problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. It is also clear that countries must do more to be faithful to what they have committed themselves to at Copenhagen.

The developing countries have done the best they could under trying conditions — underdevelopment, the debilitating burden of external indebtedness and other serious setbacks to their economies. My country is doing its part. The Philippine Government has consolidated and focused its poverty alleviation efforts into a social reform agenda. Among its key thrusts are convergence and focus in the delivery of social services, asset reform and sustainable development of productive resources, institution building and participatory governance. To guide our focus, we are employing a 33-point minimum basic needs indicator system. This comprehensive survey has so far been put in place in all of our 77 provinces, in almost two thirds of our 1,539 municipalities, and more than a third of our 41,000 villages or barangays.

We intend to persist in our efforts despite the aggravating circumstances that have been brought about by the financial turbulence in our region. We also expect the international community to manifest its solidarity with us through concrete steps, including those that are directly responsive to the commitments made at Copenhagen.

We see the preparatory process and the special session itself as a validation of the required courses of action agreed upon at the Social Summit. We see it as a recommitment to a global vision of sustained and broad-based developments, where equity and justice prevail worldwide.

And in the midst of the current economic difficulties in our part of the world, we appeal to the international community that now is the time to redouble our efforts to fully implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Sudan.

Mr. Ahmed (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his effort in preparing the report, contained in document A/53/211 of 6 August 1998, on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. My delegation also wants to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in which he stressed the importance of promoting both North-South and South-South cooperation to foster social development. Everyone has praised United Nations efforts in this sphere.

By giving special attention to the social dimension of development, we are affirming the human aspect of development. In the past, efforts were concentrated on the economic aspects of development. We are happy to recall the sponsorship by the United Nations in the 1980s of a successful meeting at Khartoum on the human aspects of development. Efforts then continued, culminating in Copenhagen in March 1995 with the World Summit for Social Development.

In studying the report of the Secretary-General, we took particular note of part IV, entitled "Priority theme for 1998: promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons: thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development". This theme, which includes the concept of the provision of social services for all, is discussed in paragraphs 16 to 19 of the report.

In this connection, my country, the Republic of Sudan, has entered upon a pioneering experience in the area of social integration by creating a number of social defence funds to help the poor and to provide them with resources enabling them to work in professions and in light industry, while covering their medical expenses. We have also created financial assistance funds for university students to help them afford accommodation and meet

other basic needs. In addition, we have set up projects during the academic vacations under the theme of "A productive student".

In connection with student aid, we want to highlight our Government's efforts to broaden the educational base of our people, out of our belief in the principle of education for all. In this context, our Government has established 23 universities throughout Sudan, where there were only 5 before it came to power.

As part of the Government's efforts to ensure social integration, public and private institutions have developed the idea of holding collective marriage ceremonies to help men and women meet their marriage costs. This represents a contribution towards their stability, and a reinforcement of the family stability that is encouraged by the precepts of Islam, which is the cornerstone of our society. I particularly remember a collective marriage ceremony organized by a government agency for a group of disabled people, a ceremony which left its impact on the members of that group, by making them part of the fabric of an integrated society.

We all believe that people are the basic focus and the purpose of development; they are also the means to that development. People live in different environments and different cultures. Thus, it has become difficult to impose a single development model on all societies. For that reason, my delegation believes that we must reflect the cultural, social and religious diversity of all countries as we strive to attain realistic and objective social development, without imposing a single model on everyone. In the light of that conviction, we call upon all members of the international community to work together to realize that principle of social development, which we have sought for so long through North-South and South-South participation and partnership.

We are making enormous efforts to further social and economic development in the face of foreign pressures. The recent aggression by the United States against a pharmaceuticals factory in my country is but the latest example. We also face domestic problems such as a civil war, which was imposed upon southern Sudan and which caused an exodus by hundreds of thousands of people from the south to the north. This placed a heavy burden on our economic resources and our social services. Despite all these factors, my Government has made valuable efforts in this regard, which have won commendation from the United Nations and other organizations.

Something else that affects our economic and social development is the influx of thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries. As it faces that burden, my country has decided to hold, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, a meeting of Foreign Ministers of African countries in December at Khartoum, to consider and seek to resolve problems related to refugees and displaced persons, in order to create an environment in which all African countries can enjoy economic and social development.

We wish in conclusion to reaffirm our support for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. Like other speakers, we are of the view that the session should reaffirm the conclusions of the Copenhagen Summit, and should not reopen debate on matters already agreed upon. We believe that all parties, especially donor countries, should demonstrate the political will to honour existing commitments.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 30th plenary meeting, held on 6 October 1998, I now call on the Observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland): The current economic and financial crises affecting a large part of the world have made the implications of globalization and interdependence clear: no longer is it possible to remain an island of prosperity when the rest of the world suffers from a serious economic crisis; poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.

In situations of economic turmoil, there is always the danger that the previously praised and obvious benefits of the open economy will be forgotten. Yet a resulting general swing back of the pendulum of economic policy must be prevented. A strategy relying on two pillars, linking social and economic policies, should achieve that purpose.

On one hand, protectionism — above all in developed countries — has to be prevented and the pursuit of sound macroeconomic policies has to be actively supported. On the other hand, the potential gains of an open economy have to be more widely spread among and within societies. Within this framework, a key tool will be the creation of freely chosen and remunerative employment in both developed and developing countries and the improvement of socio-economic conditions as specified by the recently adopted

International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which also calls for new and focused assistance for developing countries.

Innovative solutions and approaches are required to implement such a strategy, and the Swiss Government can fully subscribe to the forward-looking approach the Secretariat has emphasized in its preparatory work. Further steps should be taken, however — for example, better coordination and cooperation within the United Nations family and other international organizations to improve the impact of our actions, which has to be critically reinforced by reaching out to new important players.

Yesterday and today many speakers have suggested numerous interesting approaches, many of which are supported by the Swiss Government. The discussion of these proposals should be initiated at the earliest possible stage. However, permit me to focus today more particularly on a specific Swiss contribution which, hopefully, will promote fruitful deliberations.

During the meetings of the Preparatory Committee held in May 1998, Switzerland invited the United Nations to hold its General Assembly special session from 26 to 30 June in the year 2000 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This date conveniently follows the annual International Labour Conference, which will also be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in June 2000. Other advantages of choosing the Geneva location were presented in document A/AC.253/4. The following comments are therefore limited to particular parts of our offer.

First, Switzerland will assume all additional costs that the United Nations would have incurred. As a result, holding the follow-up conference in Geneva will have no programme budget implications for the United Nations.

Secondly, through voluntary contributions Switzerland will promote the best possible conditions for the participants of the conference. For example, to facilitate the participation of least developed countries, the Swiss Government will match the United Nations contribution for a General Assembly special session and provide an additional airline ticket to Geneva for each least developed country. For countries with no representation in Geneva, there will be fully equipped office space. Furthermore, we are currently negotiating for the best possible participant conditions with various local service providers. For example, government representatives will benefit from special conference rates for accommodation.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's note, the Swiss Government has announced its willingness to provide further assistance based on an assessment of individual needs. To ensure the continuity of the work between the preparatory process in New York and the follow-up conference in Geneva, we offer to provide assistance for travel between the two cities for countries belonging to the Group of 77 with particular economic difficulties.

As stated in the relevant document of the Preparatory Committee, a definitive decision regarding the place and date of the session has to be taken by the end of this part of the General Assembly session, in 1998. We very much hope that such a decision will be taken, and I would like to thank all those representatives who have already expressed their support for the Swiss proposal.

In conclusion, the future development of worldwide economic and social conditions hinges upon our ability to find innovative solutions. The follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, and more particularly its conference in the year 2000, provide the United Nations with an opportunity to meet this challenge. We are confident that Geneva has shown its capacity to serve as a host for such an important conference and to contribute to its success by inspiring the international community to find innovative solutions for some of the most urgent issues facing it at the dawn of the next century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision contained in paragraph 87 of document A/53/45, entitled "Provisional agenda for the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

I should like to inform members that a draft resolution on this item will be submitted to the Secretariat at a later date.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Reports of the Fifth Committee (Parts I and II) (A/53/464 and Add.1)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the two reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will first turn to part I of the report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/464).

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of part I of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly will next turn to part II of the report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/464/Add.1).

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of part II of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 118.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.